A man receiving his first call into the Holy Ministry has never been a pastor before. But make no mistake: In The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), men entering the pastoral ministry receive a pastoral formation second to none! Our men enter the parish with a solid foundation in the Scriptures, taking care to translate the original Hebrew and Greek. They are well-versed in the Lutheran Confessions derived from God’s Word. They are immersed in the history and mission of the church. They are trained and rehearsed to preach and teach God’s Word and give pastoral care to God’s people.

On this foundation of knowledge, godly wisdom continues to grow and mature in this man of God as he begins serving as a pastor. This wisdom is further cultivated as he continues to feed on knowledge — along with pastoral experience — throughout his years in the ministry.

In the LCMS, Post-Seminary Applied Learning and Support (PALS) is a step in our pastors’ journey of continuing their education and maturing in wisdom. PALS provides the pastor and his family with an environment rich in encouragement, support and care among other new pastors, led by a seasoned facilitating pastor and his wife. PALS assists in supporting a healthy transition from seminary into the Holy Ministry. It places our new pastors on a journey in the Word, mentored and cared for by sage pastors, and it provides them with continuing-education topics that will be an investment in healthy and wise service for years to come.

The Office of the Holy Ministry is the office of Christ on earth. As the pastor grows in knowledge and wisdom, he grows in applying God’s gracious Word to God’s precious people. And so, the continuing-education journey begins … and it all starts with PALS.

BY REV. DR. JAMES BANECK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LCMS PASTORAL EDUCATION

MY SON, if you receive my words and TREASURE up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to WISDOM and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for INSIGHT and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will UNDERSTAND the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come KNOWLEDGE and understanding. (PROV. 2:1–6)
CONTINUING ON THE PATH

Continuing education for pastors promotes and nurtures a desire and energy to learn. Areas of growth in knowledge and understanding often include ...

**POSTCARDS FROM THE PASTORS**

**“IT IS WELL-ESTABLISHED THAT THE HABITS PASTORS”**

form in their first years of ministry will persist until their last years of ministry. So, to have a part in making the habits of routine retreat, rejuvenation and continuing education a part of these pastors’ lives is a wonderful responsibility, and I pray it serves them, their families and their congregations well. These pastors and their wives come into their calls so well prepared and with such hearts for service and conviction for truth that I cannot help but be awed that the Lord of the church continues to protect and lead His people in these later days with such faithful shepherds. We are very well resourced by the PALS office with modules about common areas of interest and concern for pastoral ministry. But we are also encouraged to bring in resources we find that will be helpful for us pastors.”

~ Rev. Nate Reichle, LCMS North Wisconsin
District PALS facilitator (2010–present)

**“PALS HAS BEEN A WONDERFUL PLATFORM”**

for me to see how important continuing education is. I have found great encouragement to take advantage of the resources our Synod has given me as a pastor. I would love to continue my education by pursuing a Ph.D. in Old Testament Exegetical Theology. Whatever I do as far as continuing education, I desire it to be for the good and use of the greater church. The foundational education of the residential program of CTSFW and PALS has also given me opportunities to reflect on the areas that I should/need to continue to grow in as a pastor. In PALS meetings, I have received the encouragement to focus on these pursuits. Continuing education should not always be just in areas in which I want to continue my education, but in the areas that I need to work on. So I try hard to get into the topic that I need to work on. For instance, I am doing *Preach the Word* with another PALS participant from southern Illinois.”

~ Rev. Jacob Hercamp, pastor of St. Peter’s Lutheran Church, La Grange, Mo. (CTSFW, 2017)

**“PALS HAS MADE ME EXCITED ABOUT CONTINUING”**

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~ Rev. Merritt Demski, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IL (CSL, 2016)

**“THE PALS PROGRAM ENCOURAGES”**

my learning as a pastor. Forgetting the “why” and be focused on Christ in our congregations. And our understanding of Christ and how that shapes the ways in which we proclaim our forgiveness of sins, and yet we always see how vocabulary changes and culture changes and how that shapes the ways in which we proclaim our understanding for the sake of those I serve.”

~ Rev. Micah Bauer, associate pastor of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Brookings, SD (CSL, 2016)

**“IT TRULY IS A JOY AND A PRIVILEGE”**

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~ Rev. David Vanderhyde, LCMS Rocky Mountain District PALS facilitator (2016–present)

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~ Rev. Merritt Demski, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IL (CSL, 2016)
Most PALS groups use topic-based video courses or themed modules produced by PALS to support the continuing-education journey. A list of available courses and topics can be found at lcms.org/how-we-serve/education/pastoral/post-seminary-applied-learning-and-support under “Study Topics.”

NEW AND SEASONED TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Transition: Seminary to Urban/Rural Ministry
- Preaching as Pilgrimage
- Facing the Forces of Trouble and Conflict in the Pastoral Ministry
- Finding Balance and Setting Boundaries between Work and Home
- Myth of the Millennial: Connecting Generations in the Church
- Pastor: Apt to Teach
- The Pastor’s Life of Prayer
- Parenting in the Pew
- Pastoring the Dying and Funeral Preparation
- Responding to Sexual Temptation in a High Tech Society
- Building a Long-Term Ministry
- Many more

The LCMS Office of Pastoral Education is now offering scholarships to five PALS facilitators to participate in DOXOLOGY. This offers a continuing-education resource for our leaders and allows them to speak from experience to their PALS participants of the value of the DOXOLOGY program.
The Synod’s 2019 Convention showed considerable support and encouragement for PALS and pastoral formation by passing resolutions that speak to the importance of continuing education. Here are some highlights from Resolution 6-04, “To Support, Encourage, and Expect Continuing Education for all Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Pastors.”

WHEREAS, Continuing education for pastors includes, but is not limited to, a desire and energy to learn with growth in exegetics, history, systematics, preaching, teaching, outreach, pastoral care, administration, worship/liturgy, leadership, ministerial well-being, literature, philosophy, humanities, thinking skills, reasoning skills, speaking skills, people skills, growth in wisdom through practical experience, mentorship, use of a father-confessor, stewardship and finance, and community context (categories listed in the pastor’s Self-Evaluation Tool); and

WHEREAS, The LCMS has recognized at every convention since 1998 the need for pastoral continuing education, most recently in 2016 Resolution 17-01, “To Enhance Clergy Continuing Education” (adopted [Yes: 802; No: 123]), which encourages the use of the PALS program in all districts in the Synod; and

WHEREAS, PALS was created to facilitate pastors’ and their wives’ transition from seminary to first call; to assist in first call experiences such as new environment, isolation, new role adjustment, and congregational life and expectations; and to serve as the beginning of their continuing education through personal, spiritual, and vocational formation; and

WHEREAS, Both seminaries are in full support of the PALS program, recommending and encouraging their students to make use of PALS when they arrive at their first call, and inviting PALS staff to host fourth-year seminarians and their wives at an event to introduce the PALS program; and therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the district presidents not utilizing PALS and the Executive Director of Pastoral Education, who oversees the PALS program, engage in formal fraternal conversation at least annually to learn from one another to serve all of our pastors graduating from seminary and transitioning into their first call throughout the Synod; and be it further

RESOLVED, That congregations be encouraged to support their pastors’ continuing education financially and provide the time needed for continuing education; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Synod seek, and this resolution be interpreted, to ensure that post-seminary continuing education be conducted in a manner consistent with best practices, recognizing that “We, though many, are one body in Christ” (Rom. 12:5); it is a great blessing and unifying force for our Synod, as we walk together, to look to the Synod in accordance with Bylaw 3.4.3.8 for consistent, high quality, orthodox theological education.

The 2019 Synod Convention established a new triennial theme: Making Disciples for Life. How can our pastors work this new five-fold emphasis into their continuing-education journey?

- Evangelize the lost;
- Retain the faithful;
- Strengthen congregations;
- Plant new congregations and schools wherever possible, especially in urban and multicultural communities; and
- Engage in international mission in partnership with the Office of International Mission.

As pastors and congregations assess and engage their community, continuing-education possibilities for both pastors and congregations may include:

- Learning the culture and languages of the people groups in the community;
- Engaging in the Synod’s Every One His Witness® and re:Vitality initiatives; and
- Bringing all cultures and peoples into one congregation and receiving God’s gifts in one Divine Service.

resolved to further Education

To be continued...